

## Brexit, race and migration

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## **Brexit, Race and Migration**

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## **Abstract**

This timely series of interventions scrutinises the centrality of race and migration to the 2016 Brexit campaign, vote and its aftermath. It brings together five individual pieces, with an accompanying introduction, which interrogate different facets of how race, migration and Brexit interconnect: an examination of the so called 'left behinds' and the fundamental intersections between geography, race and class at the heart of Brexit motivations and contexts; an exploration of arguably parallel and similarly complex developments in the US with the rise of populism and support for Donald Trump; an analysis of the role of whiteness in the experiences of East European nationals in the UK in the face of increased anti-foreigner sentiment and uncertainty about future status; a discussion of intergenerational differences in outlooks on race and immigration and the sidelining of different people and places in Brexit debates; and a studied critique of prevailing tropes about Brexit which create divisive classed and raced categories and seek to oversimplify broader understandings of race, class and migration. Taken together these articles, all arguing for the need to eschew easy answers and superficial narratives, offer important and opportune insights into what Brexit tells us about race and migration in contemporary UK.

Keywords: Brexit, race, migration, class, place

## Introduction: Brexit, Race and Migration

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This series of five scholarly interventions, developed from a panel of the same title convened at the AAG in Boston in 2017, consider Brexit in the context of race and migration in the UK. For researchers of race and migration Brexit has come to mark a pivotal point in the UK's identity and practice as a multicultural country. The questions it has provoked have been pressing and extensive, emotive and often contentious. Has the Brexit vote heralded a new era in the mainstreaming of anti-immigrant populist sentiment and discourse, or does it constitute a revisitation of, or evolution in, earlier (post)colonial uncertainties and prejudices? And what about economics and the state? Does the Brexit vote signal a wider breakdown in the established post-war social contract and a logical response to deindustrialisation, portentous of the last throes of the 'experiment' of globalisation and the movement of bodies, as well as capital, in late modernity? Or is it something more sinister, the hijacking of a democratic system by an increasingly narrow set of interests and influences, using race and class as playthings in a deeper power struggle? The rush to find answers to these questions has become compelling, and we hope to contribute here to some of these debates and reflections. Using race and immigration as an explicit prism, our five interventions locate race and migration as central to the Brexit referendum campaign, result and aftermath. For these authors, race is implicated through the colonial invocations and nostalgias of Brexit discourses, and most fundamentally, played out in people's lives through steep rises in recorded hate crime and the creation of new racially stratified vulnerabilities. In this introduction, we highlight three points we feel these interventions highlight: first, the geographically specific intersections of race and class tied up with the Brexit campaign and vote and their consequences; second, the different temporalities at play which help us contextualise Brexit in a longer colonial chronology, as well as work through the particular pressures and racialised discourses which were circulating at the time; and third, the value in taking a step back and reflecting on how knowledge and understanding of Brexit is itself mediated, acknowledging the need to be alert to the privileging of some experiences and voices over others.

Firstly then, these pieces underline the importance of intersectional, spatially anchored analysis in understanding the Brexit vote and its fallout; place, race and class, in particular, are central themes running through these essays, articulated in different ways and at different scales. Finlay et al, for example, confront head on the geographical relevance of what they term Brexit's 'geographical schisms'. In their piece they not only draw out, and problematise, the regional geographies of the vote, but also argue powerfully for the need to work through race and class intersections through the prism of place and through ethnographic work; this is a stark contrast to the kind of 'ageographical' binary discourses which have circulated about 'anywheres' and 'somewheres' which Rogaly critiques. The interventions from Nagel as well as Isakjee and Lorne illustrate the wider connection between the Brexit vote and the election of Donald Trump, suggesting an impetus which, while shaped

in local environments, also has a much broader resonance. For the UK, Isakjee and Lorne show that a wider analysis of Brexit cannot fully separate out race and class; this is not just a sop to a surface intersectionality, but a deeper acknowledgement that race and migration cannot be understood outside of class contexts, any more than a pretence can be maintained that class is not also tied to long established racialized structures. In writing about the US, Nagel exemplifies this perfectly, demonstrating how a fundamental interlocking of race and class is just as pertinent, but works differently in different historical and geographical contexts. While class and place are still important for understanding the appeal of the Trump presidency, for example, Nagel argues that allegiances to Trump are not based on any coherent class based politics.

It is the suggestion here that race holds the key in this particular context that also invites further scrutiny about the evolving power, and nuances, of whiteness. This is an integral thread to the interventions. Finlay et al highlight the need to look beyond 'superdiversity' in the rush to make sense of the racial connotations of the Brexit vote, and take the experiences of less diverse, predominantly white places more seriously. This is something Botterill and Burrell focus on in their piece on Polish nationals in the UK. As they argue, meaningful discussions of race and Brexit necessitate a close interrogation of whiteness (see Bhambra, 2017), not just for the inherent whiteness of the colonial positioning that aspects of Brexit inhabits, but also because anti-EU sentiment presents a more complicated racial stratification than is sometimes acknowledged. As they show too, Eastern European whiteness in a Western European context carries with it further, emplaced, geopolitical racial connotations. The spatially structured intersections these pieces comment on are manifold; just as class intersects with race and migration, all the debates Brexit channels about place and belonging highlight the salience of youth and gender, as it is often working class people, younger people and women who suffer the most when it comes to the enactment of exclusionary politics such as austerity and right-wing populism.

Second, these threads also show the importance of different temporalities weaving through these developments and debates. Several papers pick up on the contemporary sense of urgency around the rise of populism, and the critical timing of heightened awareness of the movement of people into and around Europe that the so-called 'refugee crisis' stirred, intersecting directly with the run up to the Brexit vote. There is a strong argument embedded in this collection that underscores the fact that Brexit discourse is not disconnected from wider racialised tropes and positionings but has been able to refract, and in some cases capitalise on, broader contemporaneous racial anxieties. It is interesting too that several papers highlight the same events and actions - the murder of MP Jo Cox, the specific imagery used in the UKIP leave campaign. While these create points of overlap between them, this in itself is significant; together these observations capture a sense of what was going on in that moment which is vital to acknowledge, document and work through.

History matters here too. Rogaly asserts how important it is to remember that the 'crisis' that the prism of Brexit has created, and which now seems to overlay race and migration issues in the UK or indeed the US, does not present an unprecedented or unique anti-migration impetus. As Spencer (2002) shows, UK migration policy was inherently racialised long before the formal implementation of the 'hostile environment'. Panayi (1996) has catalogued the extensive history of racial violence that has plagued the UK, also highlighting how animosity has always been directed to a diversity of new, variably stratified migrants - Irish, Jewish, German, Caribbean, South Asian. In terms of race and migration, Brexit looks less of an anomaly when viewed through a longer historical lens. Geographically,

too, as Nagel confirms, the UK's ongoing struggles to achieve any kind of post-racial utopia are hardly exceptional. This paper reminds us that commitments to liberal migration policies have been historically fluid, both strengthening and receding in different ways in different times. Caution is needed when assuming any notions of 'progress' in terms of race relations or attitudes to 'foreigners'; prevailing cultures are contextually contingent and can change in different directions. But just as there has been a resurgence in anti-immigrant sentiment, and a clear strengthening of whiteness as a tool of formal political power, this paper also reminds us of the strengths of the counter-currents, the progressive possibilities that emerge in the face of these struggles. What we can take from this is that Brexit analyses, and responses to heightened tensions surrounding race, need to resist the double lures of simplicity and parochialism. This is especially important at a time when anti-immigrant politics is exercising more transnational might, but also reminds us to be alert to more progressive currents too, wherever they may emerge.

The final point is an overarching observation relating to 'voice' and who gets to speak, and be heard, about politics and about something as potentially seismic as Brexit. Our collection starts with Isakjee and Lorne investigating the 'left behind' and confronting early on the thorny issue of academic subjectivity and positionality. Did the Brexit vote catch 'academics' off guard - was Brexit 'bad news from nowhere'? Were we, as academics, too out of touch to have seen it coming? Even if we did not see this in our non-work lives, outside our supposed 'cosmopolitan ivory towers', did we not heed the warnings of all the research which has been stressing the resilience of anti-immigrant sentiment, and the fragility of multicultural encounters for meaningful and widespread anti-racism (Valentine, 2008; Clayton, 2008; Wilson, 2016; Burrell, 2016)? And if academics have had to work hard to face up to these questions, where does this leave the most publicly vocal commentators on Brexit? In the final intervention, Rogaly offers a forensic deconstruction of the arguments put forward by David Goodhart, a (white) man whose voice has been particularly prominent in framing debates about these 'anywheres' and 'somewheres', a labelling which draws people in opposition and posits categories which are unable to reflect and accommodate the complexity of contemporary British life. If understandings of Brexit are susceptible to such classed and racialised hijackings, then how do we make sure other voices are heard? In their piece, Finlay et al illustrate the unevenness at play in the production of knowledge about Brexit. They point out how some places appear to be over-researched, and others under-researched; not only is there an embedded geographic variability within the British political and economic landscape, but this is matched by a somewhat spatially patchy academic analysis and interest. This leaves some places unheard and others shouting out loud. And if entire places are lost, what about people? In their piece, Finlay et al signal the dearth of opportunity for young people, those who will be living through Brexit for the rest of their lives, to contribute to these political conversations and developments. So, if these discussions are about race and migration, at what point is the space opened up for a more pluriversal perspective to take shape? Botterill and Burrell, for example, foreground the experiences of Polish nationals in their piece, directing attention to the lived experience of being Eastern European in the UK just as debates about migration and the EU heat up. The turn to 'everyday Brexits' (Anderson and Wilson, 2017) is important here especially, but the wider point is that Brexit debates need to heed the decolonial shift inflecting the social science disciplines especially at the moment (for example Radcliffe, 2017; Noxolo, 2017). Who gets to talk about Brexit is an important political issue too.

None of these terms or positions can be taken for granted. This is why Rogaly's piece is so powerful here, for the way it demolishes the kind of oversimplified, divisive arguments put forward by commentators such as Goodhart. Those who are able to use their voice to speak about Brexit then, carry a responsibility to do this in a way that resists the dumbing down and polarisation of political culture; nuance and complexity have become radical tools and need to be utilised at every turn. With this in mind, we present here a series of interventions which purposely tease out the complicated nature of Brexit and its many intersections with race and migration.

## Bad News from Nowhere: Race, Class and the 'Left Behind'

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**Figure 1: 'Breaking Point' Poster - Family Advertising Ltd (2016) for the United Kingdom Independence Party**

The response to the Brexit vote among academics has, at times, felt uneasy. Immediately after the Brexit vote on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2016, on campuses and over the twittersphere, scholars began to process the unfolding political event, reacting personally, analytically and emotionally. Attempts at interpreting the referendum outcome coalesced into a tense mixture of surprise, uncertainty, inevitability, outrage and loss. The various reactions felt by colleagues in the academy perhaps reflected our own positionality as relatively privileged, somewhat mobile, socially liberal professionals, generally at a safer distance from the economic and political frustrations and ideologies that the Leave campaign had sought to exploit. In conversation, academics have uttered their concerns, even their disdain, for their fellow citizens who had chosen to vote for the UK to exit the European Union. The resurrection of nationalist political rhetoric was to continue beyond the Brexit vote, alienating many of us further; as if to add insult to injury the UK Prime Minister went on to declare that those who felt that they were citizens of the world, were in fact 'citizens of nowhere'.

In earnest, social scientists have begun to ask searching questions about the nature and causes of the political divides created by Brexit. The proposition of the 'left behind' has become particularly prevalent, the disaffection of whom it is thought contributed to the surprise referendum result. Echoed in the US after the election of Donald Trump, discourses have begun to emerge which position the 'left behind' as solely or primarily white working class communities. 'White working classes' are variously placed as being subject to political neglect in favour of minorities, as victims of austerity, or as retrograde protagonists of



xenophobia and racism. In each case, the identification of the 'left behind' is part of a racialised and politicised set of discourses, apportioning blame for the country's broader political circumstances.

Within the confines of this commentary, we set out how a place-based intersectional analysis is essential for examining notions of the 'left behind' associated with the Brexit vote. We raise the concern that academic scholarship attuned to subjectivities, identity politics and 'difference' is in danger of being positioned somehow as if is in opposition to, or at least obscuring, understandings of the crisis tendencies of capitalism and what this means in terms of changing economic relations and class struggle. For example, although the response to the financial and economic crisis of 2007/8 has led to an 'enduring state of austerity' (Jessop, 2017: 136), deeply entrenched racisms have also become apparent – but they have not simply escalated in tandem with poverty. Instead, racial abuse and violence, encountered both at street-level and online, rehearse all-too-familiar discriminations which emanate from longstanding and socially embedded suspicion of racialized 'others'. Considered analysis has begun to trace social-spatial injustices, shaped by class, race and gender relations which have led to political and cultural alienation, with excellent accounts appearing within and beyond geography addressing such questions in relation to Brexit (Bachmann and Sidaway 2016, Virdee and McGeever 2017). While an appeal for an intersectional approach may seem an obvious position, however, it is important to reiterate that we share a certain discomfort towards analysis that negates race or class – or obscures their relevance entirely. Brexit is a race *and* class issue.

### **'Left Behind' Britain**

Economic relations are certainly necessary to understand conditions in which disillusion with politics has surfaced. UK society has been subject to a very particular set of neoliberal economic policies since the 1980s, setting it apart from the communitarian and social-democratic capitalist welfare regimes of continental states such as France and Germany (Esping-Andersen 1996). De-industrialisation in the UK has been shaped by these political choices: relatively secure manufacturing jobs have been in severe decline since the 1960s alongside the weakening bargaining power of trade unions. During this period, there too has been a changing composition of waged employment, with increasing numbers of women undertaking paid work. Although we must be cautious of narratives of epochal economic shifts, we can observe the challenges of technology-driven change, declining reserves of mineral wealth, stagnant wage growth, global competition and the changing composition of the labour market compounded by (particular) state subsidies being withdrawn. Between 1970 and 2010 manufacturing share of employment fell from 30% to 10% under Tory and Labour governments (Rowthorn and Coutts 2013). A buoyant service sector supported economic growth in this period, but the relatively secure, reasonably well-paid employment for semi-skilled and unskilled workers has not returned. The effects of these changes have been highly uneven geographically. Whereas towns and cities suffered from the loss of manufacturing jobs, well-paid service sector jobs have largely been concentrated in London, the South East and financial centres in larger British cities.

Under successive governments, regional policy has privileged place-based regeneration over social policies (Crowley et al 2012). Declining towns and cities were encouraged to position themselves to compete for inward investment and market themselves to attract technological, creative and knowledge industries. For towns and cities without the critical mass to become cultural and technological hubs, such a strategy was hardly likely to



both revive stuttering economies, and crucially, nor would it provide a fix for chronic unemployment and underemployment. Whilst the New Labour government for a period invested heavily in health and education, redistribution through welfare policy was modest (Chote et al 2010). Regressive austerity economics under coalition and Tory governments have since wiped out even those modest achievements, and the poorest local authorities have been dealt with the largest cuts in funding from national government (Hastings et al 2017). The net effect of these constrictions is heightened further still by the long-term crises in housing, which has witnessed a decline in social housing, decreasing home ownership coinciding with increasing private rental costs.

Under these conditions, then, it is unsurprising that political disillusionment crystallising in the Brexit vote is sharpest outside London and cities in the South East, and were particularly pronounced in the North East of England, Wales and the counties and towns that lie on the edge of Birmingham's city-region. The dynamics of unemployment and deprivation in areas traditionally seen as 'peripheral' can differ from similar socio-economic conditions in urban centres. Whilst housing costs may be relatively affordable, employment opportunities are fewer and wages for full-time jobs are substantially lower. Urban landscapes punctuated by closed factories and high street shops lie as symbols of past mass employment which have long since ceased. Following desperately stuttering regional policies since the turn of the century, the centres of political and industrial power seem further away. The flows of capital and people representing economic opportunity and dynamism, are not just metaphorically distant prospects, but literal ones too. Yet it would be a mistake to fetishise deprivation as belonging solely to outlying regions. House-price rises far above rates of inflation have hugely increased the cost of living even for middle-income earners in cities considered to be 'thriving'. The possibilities of 'social mobility' have been reduced as home-ownership falls in response to increased rentier capitalism (see Christophers 2009).

However, it would be dangerous indeed to uncritically accept the racialized discourse which draws these dynamics as uniquely affecting 'white working class' communities. Black and minority ethnic populations are demonstrably shown to have lower wages, higher unemployment, lower home-ownership and substantially less wealth than their white counterparts. In towns such as Stoke on Trent and Boston, despite the high vote to leave the EU and amidst strong support for the United Kingdom Independence Party, close to 20% of the population is made of ethnic minorities. 11% of the population of Boston in 2011 was from EU accession countries alone – deprivation affects these communities as much as white groups with British passports. Whilst policies of austerity have undoubtedly made life far harder for the poorest in society, it is rarely acknowledged that they have a disproportionate effect on minority communities, particularly minority women (Runnymede 2016). And yet somewhat perversely, anti-immigration sentiment in its most potent, racialised form was a key part of the political narrative of the Brexit Leave campaign. Eastern European workers were held responsible for declining wages for native Britons, despite economic evidence that questions the strength of any such effect - except on other immigrants (Manacorda et al 2012). Even as they were defended, debates about their legitimacy centred not on their rights as humans or citizens, but on their economic worth to the British state. Fear of refugees – Muslim and black others, coming to the UK was exploited and deliberately conflated with EU membership by Leave campaigners. The underlying xenophobia and racism of the elements of the Leave campaign was crystallised in the infamous Leave campaign poster showing lines of darker-skinned refugees, seemingly marching it is inferred, towards Europe or Britain, pushing country and continent to 'Breaking Point' (Figure 1).

It is apparent, then, that a solely economic analysis of Brexit is insufficient in either explaining the vote or in the interpretation of disillusionment or what it means to feel 'left behind'. To further cement this point, we must remember that despite the narratives of Brexit being driven by the poor, the lowest two social classes still accounted for less than a quarter of the total Brexit vote (Dorling 2016). Brexit politics is at least as much about identity. The calls to 'leave Europe' do not merely appeal to those feeling left behind economically, but they exploit feelings of cultural alienation and actively appeal to racist sentiments, too. This was clear before the Brexit vote took place, when the right-wing extremist Thomas Mair murdered the progressive Labour MP Jo Cox on the street outside her constituency office, shouting the far-right slogan 'Britain First'. It was also clear after the Brexit vote, when police catalogued a sustained rise in hate-crime towards minority groups. The Home Office reported that in the month after the referendum, hate crimes rose by 41% over the same month in the previous year (BBC News 2016). Even in the eleven months after the vote, the increase is sustained, with police figures demonstrating that race and faith-based hate crimes have risen by 23% during that period (Bulman 2017).

It is also worth noting here that specifically anti-Muslim hate crimes also spiked according to the Islamophobic hate crime reporting service Tell Mama (2016). Just as EU membership and issues of refugees fleeing Syria had been deliberately conflated by the Leave campaign, fears of Muslims arriving in Britain was routinely used as racist (and misplaced) justification for Brexit (Etehead 2016). The prospect of Turkey's accession into the EU was also evoked by senior politicians such as Michael Gove playing into the Islamophobic narrative (Mason 2016). Similarly, the Remain and Leave campaigns both mobilised the issue of the Le Touquet treaty, which dictates border controls between Britain and France. The Remain campaign presented the possibility that British border controls would move from Calais in France to Dover in the UK, in the event of Brexit: the implication being that Brexit would lead to refugees and migrants arriving unhindered on British shores (see Davies et al 2017).

If racism and Islamophobia are significant driving forces of Brexit, how do we then begin to understand what is meant by communities feeling 'left behind'? As Virdee and McGeever (2017) note in their excellent recent piece on this subject, the ugly and violent forms of racism which accompanied Brexit exist alongside a breezy and vacuous nostalgia for Britain's imperial past. Indeed, as Bhabra (2017) reminds us, the colonial imaginary has long been key to the very construction of Britishness itself. Contrary to the notion that the new politics is about closure as opposed to openness, those opposing EU membership were happy to extol the virtues of global connections and relationships – but only on 'British' terms, and in 'British' interests. Such sentiment was epitomised by the Secretary for International Trade Liam Fox, whose civil servants developed plans to compensate for Brexit by strengthening ties with Commonwealth States in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, with the intention of branding the strategy as 'Empire 2.0' (Coates 2017). However offensive this label, however unrealistic such expectations and divorced from rational policy, the politics of Brexit played here speaks to a spatial imaginary of Britain's 'lost greatness'. More than anything, a sense of loss (that can emanate from nostalgia) connects the elite imperial narrative of Britain's declining historical global power and 'leadership' with the real material degradations of those suffering from the ravages of the neoliberal economy. For those who identify with this sense of loss, supporting Brexit becomes a symbolic act of challenging constructions of modernity itself. The political right readily exploits the underlying, societally embedded racisms to prevent disillusionment with capitalism from resulting in progressive action.

### **Confronting Race, Class and Space**

The tensions between Marxist and postcolonial readings of society, and the related notion that class and race represent separate, even opposing frames of understanding inequality now span decades, as theorists sympathetic to either of these philosophical strands seek to (re)define contemporary progressive politics. Much has been written criticising post-structuralism for splintering class politics along lines of gender and race – but such a critique is misguided. Discriminations based on both are products of and sustained through the *structuring* of patriarchy and racial superiority, and these in turn are nested within and between structures of capitalism (see Bhattachayya 2018). The multiple dimensions of Brexit we have discussed are a reminder that we must be cautious of assigning simplistic motivations and explanations of ‘populist’ or nationalist sentiment. Perhaps it is important to appreciate Linda McDowell’s (2008: 21) appeal for ‘scholarship that sees class through the lens of gender and race relations, that constructs class not as categorical positions but as active, ongoing and negotiable sets of practices that vary across time and space’. Yet analytical discourses must then walk the fine line of attentiveness towards the intersections of these dimensions, without retreating to the intellectual safety-net constructed by particular notions of perpetual spatial-temporal fluidities, multiplicities, super-diversities and assemblages – a theoretical retreat from the empirical challenge. After all, the success of activist movements such as #MeToo and Black Lives Matter has shown that society can respond positively to clear, unapologetic and unambiguous calls for justice on the basis of gender and race. The same can be true on the basis of class.

Furthermore, in analysing Brexit, the relations with place *are* important for understanding how the dynamics of post-industrial declines and post-colonial futures intersect, to create inequalities in material terms as well as the sense of being ‘left behind’. These inequalities are spatially distinct in production and interpretation and as such require thorough empirical quantitative and qualitative research to determine where efforts to challenge the exclusionary discourses of racism, xenophobia and deprivation may be concentrated. We recognise that relational geographies of place and subjectivities run into different tensions with territorial understandings of inequality, population and the nation-state – yet these too are underpinned by the structures of race and class. Geographers, especially those in the UK, are increasingly incentivised to pursue fashionably new theoretical ground to explain contemporary social phenomena. We suggest however that it is through maintaining the discipline’s strength of spatialising race and class inequalities and exploring the attendant intersections and experiences that will provide the most cogent analyses of Brexit – as well as practical avenues towards progressive responses.

## **Populism, Immigration, and the Trump Phenomenon in the U.S.**

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### **Introduction**

The decision by British voters to leave the European Union came as a shock to many, despite Britain's longstanding tendency to exempt itself from EU policies. The exit decision seemed almost like a fluke or an extraordinary act of impetuosity. But the singularity of the Brexit vote was called into question with the surprise victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Candidate Trump, who had aligned himself with the Brexiteers in a visit to Scotland in 2016, rallied many Americans with his open contempt for economic globalization and for the liberal-cosmopolitan elites who have provided ideological cover for it. Misogynistic, bombastic, and frequently incoherent, Trump appealed to aggrieved middle-class and working-class whites in America's 'heartland'—those rural and semi-rural counties where manufacturing jobs have been decimated by offshoring, outsourcing, and technological changes.

This short essay explores the rise of right-wing populism in the U.S.—and especially the targeting of immigrants—as a point of comparison with the Brexit vote. The dynamics driving the Trump phenomenon have shaped U.S. politics for many decades: Trump has not singlehandedly created hostility and fear toward immigrants (or feminists, gays, inner-city black populations, etc.) so much as he has legitimized and amplified existing attitudes toward these groups. But while Trump's electoral victory is perhaps not as shocking or incomprehensible as it is sometimes made out to be, it does signal a breakdown of the liberal consensus that has guided immigration policy since the 1960s. Socially liberal politicians and academics have responded with a strenuous defence of the country's expansionary immigration system, invoking the cherished idea of America as a nation of immigrants. But in challenging contemporary manifestations of racist nationalism, I wish to argue, opponents of right-wing nationalism in the U.S. (and their British counterparts) should resist the temptation to defend immigrants in the terms of their economic value or their conformity to white, middle-class, norms. While perhaps useful at a tactical level, such arguments do little to challenge the iniquities of the post-War (neo)liberal order or to remedy the dislocations that have made right-wing populism an attractive option for many voters.

### **Breaking the post-war liberal consensus**

At the core of the current swing toward right-wing populism in both Britain and the U.S. is a rejection of the post-World War II order characterized by intense marketization, economic integration, and relatively high levels of capital and labour mobility. In the U.S. context, Trump's basic argument has been that post-War commitments to free trade and multilateralism have brought about America's decline by undermining American workers and by entangling the U.S. in expensive wars. Trump has promised an 'America First' agenda that places national interests above the interests of allies, trade partners, and international institutions. Trump's rejection of internationalism has been coupled with a relentless attack on liberal social values, and especially the 'diversity talk' that treats the recognition of differences as a public virtue. This denigration of liberal social norms and the reassertion of

narrower, racialized conceptions of America's national character, has played well among older whites who have seen their social status diminish rapidly since the 1970s. These voters, as Hochschild (2016) observes, see a parade of undeserving minority groups 'cutting in line' ahead of them and gaming the system at the expense of 'real' Americans.

As in Britain, immigrants and refugees figure prominently in narratives of national decline in the U.S. In his campaign speeches, Trump portrayed America a country overrun by foreign rapists, murderers, terrorists, and other miscreants who have crossed unhindered into U.S. territory. Chants of 'build the wall', a favourite at Trump campaign rallies, continue to animate the President's public appearances, and the Trump administration has made the securitization of the U.S.-Mexico border a major priority. Trump has also rewarded his base with administrative actions targeting immigrants and refugees, including an executive order (entitled 'Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States', but referred to by opponents as the 'Muslim Ban') that imposed a 90-day suspension on the entry of people from 7 predominantly Muslim countries, and a 120-day suspension on all refugee resettlement. The Trump administration has also sought to crack down on 'sanctuary cities' that have refused to cooperate with federal immigration law-enforcement officials in detaining unauthorized immigrants.

Trump's shift away from the post-War liberal consensus on immigration is significant. For the past half-century, starting with the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 (more commonly known as the Hart-Celler Act, after its main sponsors), the U.S. has pursued a highly expansionary legal immigration system (especially when compared with Britain). Hart-Celler was signed into law at the height of the Civil Rights movement, amidst concerns about America's moral leadership in the world on issues of racial discrimination. The law abolished the national-origins quotas that had restricted immigration to the U.S. since the 1920s, eliminating race, religion, and place of origin as a basis for entry (King, 2009). It also created new priority categories based on skill and family relationships and ensured that the immediate relatives of legal immigrants would not be subject to any numerical restrictions. As a result of this legislation, immigration increased steadily through the 1970s and 1980s and then dramatically after 1989, with green-card entries (the majority from Asia and Latin America) averaging nearly 1 million per year between 1990 and 2015.

To be sure, commitment to this liberal immigration regime has waxed and waned over the years, with restrictionist sentiment bubbling to the surface with some frequency. For example, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA)—more commonly known as 'welfare reform'—barred authorized immigrants from claiming federal welfare benefits for five years after entry and gave states authority to grant or to restrict access to benefits thereafter (at the time, only around 7 percent of immigrant-headed households were drawing federal cash benefits). Unauthorized immigrants have more frequently been the target of legislative action. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA), also passed by Congress in 1996, expanded the list of deportable offenses, increased the use of detention and deportation, and created a mechanism to involve local law enforcement officials in federal immigrant enforcement duties (Coleman and Kocher, 2011). Still more punitive laws have been formulated in state legislatures. For instance, California voters in 1994 approved Proposition 187 (the 'Save our State' initiative), which barred undocumented immigrants from public education and medical care and that required public sector workers to check the citizenship status of students and patients. Similarly, in 2010 the Arizona legislature passed a bill, copied by many other states, requiring local law enforcement officers to determine the immigration

status of those ‘suspected’ of being in the country illegally (known as ‘stop and show me your papers’ provision) and to detain individuals whose immigration status has not been verified. Most of these state-level laws have been challenged in the courts and either thrown out or modified. But they have important symbolic importance for their supporters, who frequently criticize the ineffectualness of the federal government’s immigration-control measures—an assumption belied by sharp rise in the number of deaths as unauthorized migrants take ever greater risks to cross an increasingly militarized U.S.-Mexico border (see Doty, 2011).

Yet, despite such legislation aimed at intensifying immigrant insecurity, there has been no substantive change overall to the country’s liberal immigration system. Authorized immigration has continued apace, and, despite a surge of deportations during the Obama Administration, there has been no action taken to eject summarily the estimated 10-12 million unauthorized immigrants who reside in the U.S. Some scholars have explained this paradox (which appears to varying degrees in all liberal democracies) in terms of the increasing salience of human rights discourses, which emphasize the right to family reunification (the main entry route for authorized immigrants), and which make mass deportations of undocumented immigrants politically unpalatable (Joppke, 1998). There is, as well, the popular self-conception of the U.S. as a beacon of hope for the world’s oppressed and downtrodden masses. But the liberalism of the American immigration system, above all, has been enabled by business interests, whose demand for inexpensive, pliable labour (both skilled and unskilled, authorized and unauthorized) is seemingly limitless (Cornelius, 2005; in the EU context, see Favell and Hansen, 2002).

An array of mutually-reinforcing attitudes, interests, and imaginaries, then, have buttressed expansionary immigration policies for the past several decades. This consensus, however, is fast unravelling. Since the summer of 2017, Trump has been increasingly vocal in supporting restrictions on family-based immigration, which in the past decade has generated around two-thirds of all legal immigrant entries. In his attacks on family-based immigration, Trump has raised the spectre of ‘chain migration’, especially from what he has colourfully described as ‘shithole countries’. Trump has claimed repeatedly, including in his January 2018 State of the Union address, that U.S. immigrant law permit immigrants to bring in ‘virtually unlimited numbers of distant relatives’, when, in fact, family immigration rules explicitly exclude aunts, uncles, cousins, and other non-immediate family members (immediate family members, moreover, often wait years to receive their visas due to caps on certain visa categories). The Trump Administration’s general plan is to halve legal immigration and to prioritize ‘people who are skilled, who want to work, who will contribute to our society, and who will love and respect our country’—characteristics that presumably do not apply to current immigrants (Trump, 2018). The President also announced the termination of the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals (DACA) program, an executive order implemented under the Obama administration to give temporary legal status to 800,000 unauthorized immigrants brought to the U.S. as children.

What is remarkable about this situation is the apparent willingness of many Republicans to abandon pro-immigration business interests in favour of restrictionism. Since the early 2000s, when the Tea Party burst onto the scene, a hard-line anti-immigration stance has become an article of faith among conservative Republicans, who have tightened their grip on state legislatures, governorships, and Congress through electoral redistricting (Jacobson, 2013). Notably, it was the threat by several Republican state attorneys-general to sue the federal government over DACA that prompted Trump, after months of dithering, to terminate the program.

So while anti-immigrant sentiment has been a salient feature of American politics for the past 50 years, current immigration politics reflect a meaningful change in the post-War liberal order. Today's immigration debates, I would argue, more closely align with debates of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when anti-immigrant voices prevailed upon Congress to enact national-origins quotas over the objections of U.S. industrial employers. At that time, restrictionist sentiment was motivated primarily by fears among political and intellectual elites of racial pollution and the weakening of America's Anglo-Teutonic stock. This language of scientific racism and eugenics has largely disappeared from public discourse, but it is hard to miss the racial subtext of contemporary anti-immigration rhetoric, in which concerns about wage competition are grafted onto claims about immigrants' non-assimilability into white, Christian America.

### **The challenge ahead**

The breakdown of liberal consensus in the U.S. has brought to the surface social, political, and attitudinal differences that have been simmering for decades. Americans, like Britons, are deeply divided by conflicting perceptions of 'reality': Some see their country being strengthened by cultural diversity, technological change, and commitments to equality, minority rights, and non-discrimination. Others, in contrast, see their values denigrated, their status eroding, and their opportunities vanishing. Such differences at first glance seem to map onto class disparities, which have widened considerably since the 1970s as wages for most American workers have stagnated. The concentration of wealth in the U.S. today rivals that of the Gilded Age, a pattern reinforced by the propensity among the wealthy to hoard opportunity and privilege (Reeves, 2017). Yet the rise of Donald Trump has not signalled the emergence of a cohesive class-based politics committed to the redistribution of wealth. While support for Trump was especially pronounced in counties with relatively few college graduates and rising levels of deprivation and illness, the overwhelming majority of Trump voters were, in fact, middle- or upper-income people (Silver, 2016 ; Mutz, 2018). Far from rebelling against America's economic elite in the 2016 election, Trump supporters have largely aligned themselves with a traditional Republican agenda of tax cuts, deregulation, and reductions in public services (most notably through the dismantling of the Affordable Care Act).

In short, the major political fault lines in the U.S. today reflect messy configurations of class, racial status, education, and place-based experiences and outlooks. Such complexities can make it difficult to discern a political path forward to counter Trump's brand of right-wing nationalism. This is not to say that there has been a shortage of 'progressive' political action since the election-- witness, for instance, the Women's March on Washington, youth-based activism against gun violence, and displays of black solidarity among professional athletes. Some elements of the progressive political response to Trump, however, have been problematic and possibly counterproductive. The relentless mockery of the President on late-night television shows, for instance, while perhaps well deserved, often smacks of white liberal smugness and sanctimony. Equally problematic is the tendency of progressives, in defending the post-1965 immigration system, to act as cheerleaders for American capitalism and nationalism. Supporters of DACA, for instance, commonly assert the deservingness of young undocumented immigrants by depicting them as respectable taxpayers/workers, aspiring students, and budding civic leaders. Such depictions, while an important antidote to white-nationalist rhetoric about immigrants as 'takers', criminals, and subversives, upholds a benchmark of middle-class whiteness against which both citizens and non-citizens are



measured (c.f. Gokariksel and Smith, 2017). What is left out is an honest discussion of the historical role that immigration has played in the segmentation of the labour force, the reproduction of labour-market inequalities, and the concentration of power and wealth in the U.S. (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Defenders of immigration commonly cite evidence that immigration has a net positive impact on the economy, but it is disingenuous to say that immigration uniformly benefits all Americans. Like free-trade policies and technological changes, the benefits of immigration have tended to accrue to certain Americans—particularly to business owners, who have been able to reduce their wage bills, and to wealthier households, who enjoy greater access to inexpensive personal services.

In the acrimonious political environment that exists today in both the U.S. and Britain, the possibility of a broad-based redistributive politics that acknowledges cultural grievances without legitimizing them seems remote. But history provides us with an example of a populist politics that bridged deep social divides while envisioning a more just and equitable political-economic system. I refer here to the radical Populist movement that took shape in the tumultuous years after the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865). The Populist movement was driven by white smallholders in the South, whose traditional economic autonomy was severely threatened in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by banks, merchants, railroads, and large landowners. These farmers demanded that the federal government intervene in the financial system to stabilize crop prices and to protect farmers from debt. Intriguingly, in their fight for justice and political voice, white farmers allied themselves with black farmers, who faced a similar set of circumstances, compounded, of course, by intense racism. While this alliance was not entirely harmonious, Populist appeals to the equality of all working people regardless of colour appear to have been genuine. Populists, it should be noted, also provided an important platform for women, including the radical suffragette Mary Elizabeth Lease (for a fuller discussion, see Ayers, 1992).

White Southern elites aligned with the Democratic Party mercilessly harassed radical Populists, accusing them of 'socialism' and using electoral fraud to undermine their gains. Most egregiously, white elites coerced (or paid) impoverished blacks to vote for the Democrats in state elections, causing white Populists to abandon their black allies and to revert to the anti-black racism that was the order of the day. By the late 1890s, white Democrats had successfully wrested control over Southern state legislatures, imposing poll taxes and literacy requirements that disenfranchised not only blacks but also poor rural whites. For the next half-century, the South followed a path of white supremacy, regressive labour policies, and one-party rule, languishing in poverty even as the U.S. became the world's premier industrial power. This painful history serves as a pointed reminder of what is at stake in this moment of resurgent right-wing nationalism in the U.S. and Britain: in it, we see both the possibility of a transformative, anti-racist, coalitional politics, and the perils of not pursuing it.

## **Race, Place and Young People in the Age of Brexit**

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On the morning of June 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, the British public awoke to the resounding news that the United Kingdom would no longer be part of the European Union (EU). Like the earthly movement of tectonic plates, the deep reverberations of this decision have yet to make themselves fully known. Nevertheless, the initial tremors of what is a seismic decision are already being felt. Following the Referendum, marked divisions around race, class, age and region have been made manifest. The generational divisions were especially stark, with a clear fracture in the way younger and older generations voted in the Referendum. Many polls indicated a majority of younger voters voted to remain in the EU, while a majority of older people voted to leave (Speed, 2016). Of further concern is that those under the age of 18 years were legally barred from participating in the Referendum, which meant younger generations were deprived of a voice (Ferguson, 2016). This has resulted in the opinions of many younger people going unheard, yet - rather paradoxically - they will become the generational inheritors and shapers of a post-Brexit nation. Therefore, what we want to put forward in this commentary is a compelling need to engage with the silenced voices and everyday experiences of younger and newer generations. Given the centrality of immigration – and its synonym race - in the Brexit debate, analysing young people's attitudes to such issues is of especial importance. We need to ask, what are young people's experiences and perceptions of immigration and diversity, and what forms of attachment and belonging do young people express? Moreover, we need to know much more about the experiences of young people from diverse backgrounds (gender, place, class, ethnicity, religion etc.), and to examine how intersecting identities and geographies shape youth opinions and experiences.

To grapple with such issues in this commentary, we explore the overlapping ways in which age, place and social class have become central fault lines in the Brexit debate and can impact upon ideas of difference, particularly when it comes to attitudes to race and immigration. We begin by outlining how race came to take centre stage in the EU Referendum and its aftermath. Following this we identify how Brexit has come to expose a political schism between young people, middle-aged and older generations when it comes to their respective world views, and why there is a compelling need to focus on the voices and experiences of young people. We then explore geographies of social class and location to argue that the analysis of place needs to be expanded to incorporate peripheral post-industrial areas and that class needs to be re-centred in race and migration research.

### **The Spectre of Race**

In the build up to the EU Referendum media and academic commentators feverishly reported on the possibility of Brexit and the future direction of the UK. Although a diverse range of opinions regarding whether it was better for Britain to remain or leave the EU were garnered, xenophobic and anti-migrant narratives soon came to dominate public debate (Foster, 2016). From early 'Go Home' billboard vans previously trialled in London to urge

‘undocumented immigrants’ to leave the UK, to UKIP’s poster for leaving the EU (see figure 1), featuring a queue of mostly non-white bodies (possibly asylum-seekers rather than migrants from EU member states), it was evident that race and immigration were thoroughly intertwined in the debate. The residue of racism can also be traced in political rhetoric declaring immigration to be at ‘breaking point’, repeated phrases that ‘Britain is full’, and the mantra of ‘taking back control’ – discourses which symbolise a Referendum that had become highly toxic (Skey, 2016; Chu, 2016; Stewart and Mason, 2016). The idea of ‘taking back control’ was rapidly transposed from an initial agenda regarding UK independence from EU governance and supra-national policy, into a particular, and more myopic concern with domestic immigration and the policing of national borders.

In many respects Brexit is an expression of the psycho-social condition Paul Gilroy (2004) depicts as ‘postcolonial melancholia’, where Britain’s un-mourned attachment to Empire is disavowed, coming back to haunt the postcolonial present through an imaginary set of privileges felt to be intrinsic to whiteness: being ‘first in the queue’ when it comes to accessing public housing stock, NHS treatment, school choice, employment opportunities, social security and welfare (see *Who Cares about the White Working Class?*, Runnymede Trust, 2009). Poignantly these imagined ‘white entitlements’ not only exclude newcomers, but fail to extend to second and third generation Black and Minority Ethnic youth. For Garner (2016) such racialized feelings and attachments are formative of what he regards as the ‘moral economy of whiteness’ that then becomes expressed in public discourse. When discharged in this way such discourses, feelings and affects give life to the fantasy of a ‘white nation’ (Hage, 1998).

Bachmann and Sidaway (2016) point to the imperial geopolitics of Brexit and how nationalism and uneven development were key ingredients underpinning the vote to Leave. In a prescient paper they note how British politicians were complicit in enabling ‘Brussels bureaucrats’ to perform as a repository for anger and resentment about political disenfranchisement, economic inequalities and loss of empire. Here, Brexit appears a remedy to powerlessness, an opportunity to turn back the clock, to purge, cleanse, renew and regenerate the national body politic (Nayak, 2017). This entails wiping away the dirt that over time has come to accumulate and corrode the nation state – multiculturalism, minorities, Muslims and migrants being formative tropes in this narrative of geopolitical decline. As the social anthropologist Douglas (2002) imparts, what different societies tend to classify as ‘dirt’ is often arbitrary and symbolic, revealing more about their own rules and systematic order. Nevertheless, once put into a classificatory register, ‘Dirt offends against order’, to the extent that its eradication is seen as ‘a positive effort to organise the environment’ (p.7). This violent reordering crystallised in the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in her West Yorkshire constituency, killed by Thomas Mair, a perpetrator with far-Right links, who shouted ‘Britain First’ as he fatally stabbed Cox. Mair’s proclamation parallels Trump’s election call, ‘America First’, which envisages a magical restoration of the ‘natural order’ where immigrants, new world powers and multicultural sympathies are put back firmly in their place. While Britain First is a far-Right party, beyond such extremism was to be found a broader national rise in racially and religiously aggravated violence in the immediate aftermath of the vote; demonstrating how race precedes and supersedes the Referendum as a dividing line in contemporary Britain.

### **Young People and Generational Change**

In the context of a United Kingdom where the ‘remainders of race’ (Amin, 2010) remain evident, we now wish to highlight how young people’s voices have been neglected in

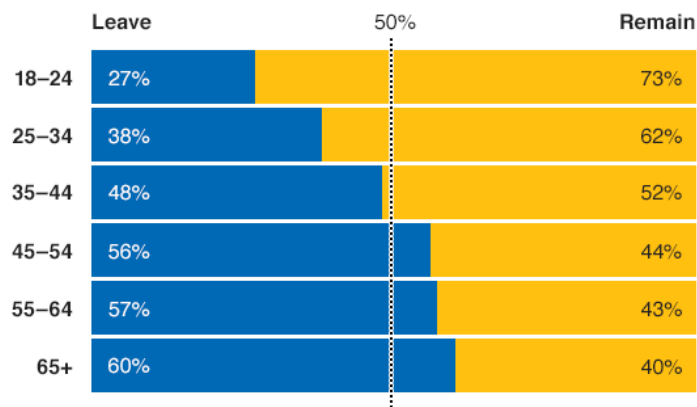
the Brexit debate and the intergenerational differences that pattern the voting spectrum. The narratives and debates surrounding the Referendum overlooked the youth question with both 'Remainers' and 'Leavers' paying scant attention to the future plight of young people (McFarland and Owen, 2016; Spiro, 2016). According to journalist Zachary Spiro (2016) of the *New Statesman* the assumption that young people generally do not vote, resulted in their opinions being ignored and undervalued by both sides of the campaign. Moreover, unlike the 2014 Scottish Referendum (Hopkins, 2015), 16-17 year olds were denied the right to vote in the EU Referendum with little public debate or campaigning around age inclusion. That young people are the ones who will have to live with this decision for a lifetime, has led the Head of National Union of Students (NUS) Wales to label the omission of 16 and 17 year olds from the vote a 'disgrace' whereupon, 'they were shut out of their own future on this occasion' (Ferguson, 2016). As such, young people's political and democratic rights as citizens to participate in one of the most important decisions in the UK's recent history were denied.

Since the Referendum results became clear, the prism of age has emerged as one of the most prominent axes whereby attitudes towards Brexit are differently refracted. A strong difference in opinion about the future direction of the UK is apparent, with young people overwhelmingly voting in favour of remaining and older people voting to leave. For example, a *YouGov* poll estimated that 75% of 18-24 year olds voted to remain, while 61% of 65+ year olds voted to leave (Speed, 2016). *YouGov* also conducted a poll with those 16-24 years and still found 72% were in favour of remaining. The tipping point around age-related responses seems to be around the mid-40s, where from that point onwards the majority of adults tended to vote 'Leave'. Moreover, after the early prediction of a relatively low turnout of young voters, a more recent poll by the LSE has estimated that around 64% of 18-24 years voted in the Referendum (Helm, 2016). Therefore, the assumed lack of engagement in politics by young people did not appear to come to fruition, though it remains to be seen if the youth turnout was lower in more economically deprived regions.

With this relatively high turnout of young voters, what has become apparent is a significant generational rupture, between young adults, the middle-aged and elderly (see figure 2). Compared to older generations, the political identity of the majority of younger people appears to be significantly more open to the EU and against isolationism (Banaji & Mejias, 2018). However, the subjugation of younger voices during the run up to the Referendum meant that debates about race, immigration and what it means to be British – issues central to the overarching debate – seldom included the perspectives of young people. As we have seen, a reactionary and nationalist discourse came to dominate the EU debate but its disregard for youth opinions has resulted in a partial and incomplete picture. The Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (2017) offers some ways forward here in their work exploring young people's attitudes and responses to Brexit. They assert that the generational rupture is in part due to younger generations being 'less likely to embrace traditional conceptions of national identity', which, they argue, can result in a more open attitude to EU membership and cultural differences. This alludes to quite different interpretations being articulated when it comes to citizenship and belonging. Instead it hints at the development of evolving and differing relationships for younger generations where processes of globalisation, superdiverse living, convivial encounters and post-race thinking may engender different ways of living and being (Harries et al, 2016; Rosbrook-Thompson 2016). This potentially more porous, cosmopolitan and global attitude runs counter to nationalist discourses about citizenship and immigration augmented by the British government. 'If you believe you're a citizen of the world', opined Prime Minister Theresa May,

‘you’re a citizen of nowhere’ (*The Telegraph*, 5 October, 2016). In contrast, many young people may assert transnational modes of diasporic belonging and engage in forms of ‘flexible citizenship’ (Hörschelmann and El Refaie, 2014; Ong, 1999), premised on multiple and diverse attachments to place. However, there is a danger here that young people are homogenously constructed as mobile, flexible and cosmopolitan, in ways that elide contrasting youth experiences – such as immobility and social exclusion – apparent in many locations around the UK (McDonald et al, 2005).

#### How different age groups voted



Source: Lord Ashcroft Polls

BBC

**Figure 2: Generational Differences (source: Lord Ashcroft Polls, reproduced by the BBC)**

In grappling with these multi-layered and multi-scalar complexities, we put forward the premise that a detailed engagement with young people’s lives is required if we are to advance a rigorous understanding of race and belonging in post-Brexit Britain. It is imperative here to consider the ‘happening’ of Brexit on the ground, and the habitual ways in which young people perform Brexit in conversations, feelings, affects and bodily dispositions that comprise what Anderson and Wilson (2017) term ‘everyday Brexits’. Given that young people will primarily be the ones who live through the deep societal changes as a result of the breach with Europe, the exclusion of young people’s voices, feelings and attachments is all the more problematic. We contend that a concerted focus on young people can inform us of how nationalism is lived and felt; the relationship between superdiverse forms of migration, settlement and practices of ‘commonplace diversity’ (Wessendorf, 2013); and the degree to which young people are global citizens, capable of engaging with transnational mobility and flexible market economies.

#### Place and the Geography of Voting Patterns

Our third point, following our interventions on young people and race, is more centrally to do with geography and the politics of place. In addition to social divisions, place is another significant divider in how people voted in the Referendum (Short, 2016). The vote exposed a country split between some urban areas and the Celtic nations on one hand, and much of rural England and Wales on the other. For example, London (59.9%), Scotland (62%) and Northern Ireland (55.8%) were the only regions that held a majority of remain voters. In the rest of the UK’s regions, the majority voted for Brexit, most noticeably in the North-East, Midlands and Yorkshire. The antipathy attributed to politicians and ‘Southern metropolitan

elites' exposed 'a phantom border' that 'has always existed but long been glossed over' (Veit and Sidaway, 2016: 49). These geographical schisms have resulted in commentators talking about 'the political geography of a disunited kingdom' (Short, 2016) and a country that is geographically 'fractured and fractious' (Pattie, 2016). In mapping these divides the notion of 'left behind' places has surfaced, as discussed by Authors C and D in this commentary, where the phrase refers to post-industrial areas with high levels of deprivation that voted to leave. This suggests divergent feelings concerning immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in different locales around the UK. The 'new geographies of racism' (Burnett, 2011) are exemplified in research conducted by the Institute of Race Relations, documenting a growing number of racist incidents occurring in places such as Stoke, Peterborough and Plymouth. Semi-rural places, decaying coastal towns and neglected post-industrial areas formative of these hotspots.

Existing geographical research into such issues within Britain has almost been entirely located in large multi-ethnic cities. This includes a profusion of work on superdiversity in London (Neal et al., 2015), Leicester (Clayton, 2012) Bradford (Phillips et. al, 2014) and Birmingham (Wilson, 2014; 2015). With significant connections to Britain's colonial past, these are urban spaces that have relatively long histories of migrant settlement, where multiculturalism is embedded into the urban fabric and part and parcel of the 'thrown-togetherness' of space (Massey, 2005). Consequently, knowledge that is framing important debates around the urban such as 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007), encounters with strangers (Ahmed, 2000) and 'conviviality' (Gilroy, 2004) are primarily premised on experiences in larger multi-ethnic cities. While we would concur that these are highly important spaces to research, with a range of pressing issues related to race and migration, they are disproportionately targeted by social researchers (see for example Neal et al, 2016). The symmetry that connects research on diversity with particular multicultural urban locations can risk absencing other places. Notwithstanding some notable exceptions (Grillo, 2005; Ray and Reed, 2005; Kesten et al 2011; Rogaly and Qureshi, 2013), the symbolic pull of metropolitan spaces has seen 'peripheral' post-industrial places, coastal towns and semi-rural locations going comparatively overlooked.

The geographical divergence of opinions exposed by the Brexit vote reveal how rural locations such as Boston in Lincolnshire and post-industrial cities such as Stoke on Trent in the 'Potteries' host amongst the highest percentage of people voting to leave. We would contend that it is precisely the histories and geographies of these more neglected areas where an impassioned leave vote is registered, that require most attention from scholars working in the fields of race, ethnicity and migration studies. Significantly, very little is known about young people's perceptions and experiences of diversity in predominantly white, post-industrial cities and the impact that social class and austerity may have on young people in these localities. Although the EU Referendum results allude to a youth opinion that is pro-EU and more comfortable with diversity than older generations, there is a lack of understanding about how young people's opinions vary or converge in different locations around the UK. We suggest that we should expand our geographical understandings of race and ethnicity beyond the multicultural metropolis to consider marginalised, mainly-white post-industrial locales, rural areas with migrant labour, and seaside towns serviced by Eastern Europeans amongst others. In these areas we need to examine the types of encounters and feelings young people display towards difference and diversity, and to understand the sense of belonging and attachments that are attributed at different spatial scales, such as the local neighbourhood, the city, the nation and the global. This will help to shed light on the degree

to which young people from post-industrial cities develop convivial sensibilities or accrue more acute forms of parochialism and nationalism.

Although social class has resurfaced in public debates in the aftermath of Brexit in the UK and Donald Trump's election in the US (Khan and Shaheen, 2017), much academic work into superdiversity, passing encounters and conviviality has had surprisingly little to say regarding social class inequalities. As Goodwin and Heath (2016) acknowledge poverty, low-skills and lack of opportunity were pivotal to people voting to leave the EU, with education inequality a dominant factor. Their conclusion is a sobering one: 'Groups in Britain who have been "left behind" by rapid economic change and feel cut adrift from the mainstream consensus were the most likely to support Brexit' (para. 6). Above all this suggests a need for research to be more attentive to social class and the topographies of power shaping young lives. We need to ask how young people's social class backgrounds are shaping their perceptions and experiences of belonging, diversity, immigration and nationhood.

Moreover, the portrait is also more complex than any rudimentary categorisation may suggest. For example, Dorling (2016) has argued that the working class have been 'unfairly blamed' for the outcome of the EU Referendum, which he regards a consequence of rising inequality. Certainly there are numerous wards where electorates with lower educational qualifications produced low leave and high remain votes. While these wards are more exceptional, they also have high ethnic minority populations, including parts of Birmingham and Haringey in North London. As argued by Khan and Shaheen in a recent report on *Race and Class* by the Runnymede Trust (2017), (working) class identities are not the sole preserve of white people and class clearly impacts upon the lives and experiences of ethnic minorities and non-white populations in the UK. Bhambra (2017) supplements this debate, asserting that ethnic minorities in the UK disproportionately constitute the category of working class, but as a result of a 'methodological whiteness' in research, they are frequently erased from debates about class.

### **Concluding remarks**

This critical intervention into the Brexit debate has sought to offer an engagement with emerging generations, race and place. We have argued that not only were young people marginalised from the vote, but they continue to remain side-lined in political discussions about the future. For example a recent anonymous poll undertaken with our Stage 1 Geography Undergraduate students at Newcastle University (October 2018, n=229 responses) asked a range of questions, including, 'how would you vote in the EU Referendum if it was held today?' Bearing in mind that most students were too young to participate in 2016, 84.3% voted to remain, with 7.9% preferring to leave and 7.9% expressing no opinion. While this is a very particular sample, in terms of their educational profiles, it is evident that many hold a clear opinion that continues to go unheard. In this short communication we have sought to illuminate some key structural patterns around age, class, race and place that may have gone overlooked, yet are fundamental to an understanding of the vote to leave. These structural divisions do not easily dissolve. In many parts of the UK the effects of low-paid labour, zero hours contracts, austerity measures and the shrinking of the welfare state have had a profound effect upon society. Much of this impacts acutely upon the future of young people. For example precarious labour, increased university fees, long-term debt, unaffordable housing for 'generation rent' and a diminishing public sector pension pot for an aging population are rapidly restructuring youth transitions into adulthood and sharpening



inequality. We contend that the lack of attention given to youth experiences in marginal places needs to be redressed.

Throughout we have emphasised how the 'spectre of race' continues to haunt the postcolonial present and is often made manifest in debates around 'white rights' and entitlements. At the same time it is worth considering the intertwining of race and place. The notion of 'left-behind' places, which has surfaced after the Referendum, can itself suggest that some localities are less developed, 'backward' and lacking a cosmopolitan, global aesthete. In a sophisticated critique of such power-laden tropes, Tomaney (2013: 658) has argued in defence of 'parochialism' seeking to 'rescue local attachments and a sense of belonging from comopolites', but in ways that are not necessarily reactionary or exclusive. A further way in which we might creatively rethink place outside of the familiar rubric of developed/underdeveloped, advanced/'left behind', core/periphery, cosmopolitan/parochial is through considering the relational, contingent, co-production of place. This can be found in postcolonial work that seeks to 'provincialize Europe' (Charkrobarty, 2000), develop an interrelated 'comparative urbanism' (Robinson and Roy, 2016) and appreciate how the imaginative scripting of the 'Orient' was symbolically and materially essential to how Europe constructed its own sense of self (Said, 1978). Some of these postcolonial interventions are differently taken forward in Katz's (2001) study of young lives in Sudan and New York. Here, Katz generatively deploys the notion of 'counter-topography' to connect seemingly disparate places and processes together, thereby demonstrating how 'growing up global' is about how global processes interact with the social and material facets of place. These are just some of the many ways in which policy makers and academics might rethink, rework and ultimately reconnect with people and places that have too often have gone marginalized or ignored.

## **(In)visibility, privilege and the performance of whiteness in Brexit Britain: Polish migrants in Britain's shifting migration regime**

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This intervention explores the experiences of Polish nationals in Britain in the context of the 2016 UK referendum on EU membership (Brexit vote) campaign and result. Using the testimonies of Polish nationals in Britain we reflect on how whiteness is lived and felt in circumstances of raised anti-immigrant sentiment, before connecting these experiences to wider discussions concerning mobility privilege and the broader structural racisms and legacies that shape the discourse and governance of migration. Ultimately, we show how the Polish case-study, in light of Brexit, illuminates the human, complex, often contradictory and always racialised contexts of Britain's migration regime.

### **Whiteness and Polish Nationals in the UK: The Limits of an 'Invisible' Identity and the Erosion of Privileged Status**

The Brexit vote, and the volume and nature of anti-Polish sentiment which preceded and followed it (Krupa, 2016), offers an important reminder that being white, even with all the privilege it does confer, can sometimes offer only limited protection against anti-immigrant agitation and migration regime insecurity. This raises new questions about how we might engage with the concept of whiteness. From its foundational roots in the work of W.B. DuBois (1935) Audre Lorde (1984) and bell hooks (1989), academic scholarship on whiteness has grown rapidly over the past 20-30 years and is now in its 'third wave' iteration (Twine and Gallagher, 2008; for further reviews see Fine et al., 1997; Nayak, 2007; Steyn and Conway, 2010; Garner, 2017). This body of work has advanced an understanding of whiteness as a structure, a discourse and a 'problematic' from which to analyse social relations (Garner, 2007:3). Whiteness, Linke, (1999) argues, is always constructed in relation to, and superior to, other identities, as an ever-present marker of perceived supremacy and domination. It is a space invader (Puwar, 2004; Kobayashi and Peake, 2000), an 'omnipresent' (McGuinness, 2000: 226) and 'mythical norm' (Lorde, 1984), yet invisible for those who 'inhabit it' (Ahmed, 2004; Jackson, 1998). There is a strong emphasis on the time-space contingency and malleable nature of whiteness (see Ignatiev, 1995; Roediger, 2005), suggesting a hierarchy of 'shades' of whiteness where the relational aspects of identity ensure that some groups are deemed to be whiter than others (Garner, 2007; McDowell, 2009). As Twine and Gallagher argue (2008, 7), academic understandings of whiteness have matured to the point that studies now explore the 'nuanced and locally specific ways in which whiteness as a form of power is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented', and the relational, contextual and situational nature of white privilege, including that which is taken for granted, ignored or 'perceived as a source of victimisation' (*ibid.* 7). In their study of 'White Americans', for example, Warren and Twine (1997) argue that the boundaries of whiteness are expanding in the US as 'non-black' immigrant groups who self-position as white challenge the boundaries of 'the colour line'. If this category of whiteness can be expanded in certain

situations, it can also be contracted; many immigrant groups in contemporary Europe are positioned as 'not quite white' through a range of discursive practices in public, media and politics.

We argue that Polish migrant experiences in Brexit Britain offer an important prism through which to view the various (in)visibilities and performativities of whiteness, and we discuss this here using testimonies from Polish nationals before and after the Brexit result. The specifically racialised position of Eastern Europeans in the UK has already been receiving attention. Fox et al. (2012) argue that 'new Europeans' from East-Central Europe (ECE) have become racialized subjects in the UK, but positioned as 'inbetween', on the one hand economically marginalised in the labour market, while on the other racially privileged through their white identity (see Parutis, 2011), and we can add to this legally privileged through their EU national status.<sup>1</sup> Garner (2018) sees the position of Eastern Europeans after the Brexit vote as one of hierarchy-in-progress, nominally racialized as white yet subject to exclusionary attacks. He makes a comparison with Roediger's (1991) study of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century European migrants in the USA to show their relational positioning in the complex social relations encountered through migration. For Eastern Europeans in the UK, these notions of hierarchies and 'inbetweenness' also force us to confront the postcolonial power dynamics within Europe vis-a-vis the relational positioning of north/west Europe and its 'backward', exotic eastern other (Buchowski, 2006; Burrell, 2011) - a perpetual trope in British culture, literature and film (Korte et al, 2010). Importantly, this is an othering which is anchored in geopolitical imaginaries as well as racialised, class intersectionalities. This resonated in an interview undertaken by (author B) with 'Julia', shortly after 2004:

I feel like I am coming from a poor country. They are not very sympathetic, and they speak to you very loud, thinking that you don't speak very good English. And people ask you if there are any polar bears in Poland, twice I have had this question, 'is it true that there are polar bears in Poland?' Yeah, in the zoo. It kind of puts you off meeting people because you have to explain, there are very few people who actually know something about Poland, have been to Poland.

Similarly, in research with Italians in post-Brexit referendum UK, Mazilli and King (2017) found that some respondents placed themselves within a hierarchy of Europeanness, with Italians ahead of 'Slavs' and 'Turks'. If Poles sit in an 'inbetween' locus in the UK, these orientalist hierarchies are in play too - more 'western' than Commonwealth or Middle Eastern populations, but not as western as other, nearer, Europeans.

These complex, sometimes shaky, constructed hierarchies challenge the assumed invisibility of white migrants in the UK. While Linke (1999:27) can argue that whiteness is 'disassociated from physicality', other studies have punctured the notion that European migrants in Britain automatically inhabit a certain invisibility 'on the ground' (Rzepnikowska, 2015). If, as Colic-Piesker (2005:622) argues, whiteness is also about 'class, status, language and other features of the individual that can be discerned in social interaction', then there are clearly many facets of daily life where European migrants' visibility is potentially elevated.

It is here we can see, drawing on research undertaken with Polish nationals in Scotland (first author) in the aftermath of the Brexit vote, how particular white bodies are surfaced

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<sup>1</sup> Our aim here is not to re-centre whiteness or to conceal racism (cf. Bonnett, 2000). Similarly, we do not intend to reproduce essentialist categories nor place white experience at the centre of intellectual inquiry – it is our aim to make connections and find differences between processes of racialisation that take place within European migration regimes.

and made visible in the context of political and legal uncertainty and anti-immigrant sentiment.

Dorota has lived in Scotland for 12 years, and she and her Spanish husband, Pedro, have two children.

Since we live here we have to take, I have to take buses more often...And I don't like to talk to [my children] in Polish because this, I have, maybe it's my, it's my head again, but I have, sometimes I am being looked at...But certainly I, I think there was a few moments like that where I felt what previously [before the referendum] did not alert anyone to pay attention to me... misbehaviour of a child being, you know, talked to in a foreign language does evoke certain nodding, huffing, or you know like, rolling eyes and stuff.

Since the Brexit vote Dorota does not recognise whiteness as a mask of protection and feels marginalised and marked as an outsider in her everyday interactions with others. She changes her behaviour on public transport, minimising her foreignness by not speaking Polish, a strategy to detach herself from the stigma associated with the Polish 'migrant worker' (cf. Ryan, 2010). Dorota's husband, Pedro, also spoke about the 'targeting' of Polish nationals since the Brexit vote, compared to his own experience as a 'less visible' Spaniard. So, what is Dorota negotiating here that is an impact of Brexit? The intensification of anti-immigrant sentiment among a general public leading to heightened visibility as an outsider? The threat of being seen through the lens of migration silences Dorota, she minimises her difference, and is confronted with a kind of temporary 'double consciousness'; of 'looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity' (DuBois, 1994:2).

Helena moved to Scotland in 2006 and has recently become a British citizen. She explains here some of her conflicting emotions about Britain following the Brexit vote:

I think it created this artificial kind of border...or limit between us and them. And I never felt it before and now I feel like I'm them and not, you know, us.

...And I have an accent. Whenever I speak someone will hear that I'm a foreigner. I never felt ashamed of it or anything like that but now, you know, you open your mouth and you don't know whether someone will react to it... I never thought that I'd have to do defend myself.

The references to 'us' and 'them' shift as she explains her sense of abandonment, betrayal and disbelief - she had never before expected to defend herself from offensive comments as a white migrant in a predominantly white country (cf. McDowell, 2009; Cook, Dwyer and Waite, 2011). She feels angry at British people and politicians for rejecting her compliance and enthusiasm for making Britain her home, and is stung by the sudden shift in the politics of belonging towards new racialized hierarchies. Helena's racial consciousness is at once raised and threatened as she realises she is an identifiable 'migrant', no longer protected by her white identity, signalling a loss of power (Frankenburg, 1993).

These experiences are further encapsulated in Maria's testimony. Maria moved to Edinburgh in 2005, is single with one child.

I was angry, I was anxious... I was quieter after Friday. In a weird way, you know, I felt like maybe I shouldn't just talk because my accent is going to tell them that I am foreign... [I] never thought that a time would come when this type of racism, xenophobic comments would be acceptable again. Not only in the private life, in the public life. And that's the scary bit.

Here she talks about her anxiety and strategies of self-silencing after the vote. She expresses

a feeling of paralysis and disbelief at the channeling of xenophobia towards her. Racism is a new experience that she hadn't previously encountered in such potency and she feels a sense of outrage. Furthermore, we see the emergence of a new future orientated insecurity, unsettling the life she has built.

### **Overcoming mobility binaries**

These experiences raise some difficult questions in the wider context of the Brexit vote and the racial, and racist, dynamics of Britain's migration regime. It is impossible to consider the exposure of EU migrants to racism without simultaneously acknowledging the ongoing racism and discrimination experienced by the BAME population within this climate. It is equally difficult to think about the new more vulnerable status of EU migrants without acknowledging the struggles and uncertainties that the larger migrant population has been enduring whilst navigating Britain's 'hostile environment', long before Brexit, something currently being exemplified by the Conservative government's treatment of the children of the 'Windrush generation'. However inflected the whiteness of Polish migrants has been, as Garner (2007: 66) points out, 'not being white, and being black are two very different things'. Being part of the EU mobility regime, and being outside of it, have, similarly translated into starkly differentiated experiences. Emejulu (2016) argues strongly that there is a responsibility that comes with the new 'outrage' against racism against white EU nationals:

*"What does it mean that those who now are expressing 'concern' about a surge in xenophobia have previously had little to say about everyday and institutionalised racism and violence that people of colour experience? And that people of colour were not taken at our word, as others have been, about what we experience? It seems some people are only concerned with racism and xenophobia when their own privileged migration status is challenged."*

It has to be acknowledged that perhaps even more than being white, being an EU national has afforded Poles in the UK a legal privilege that, up to now, has shaped experiences of integration and arguably offered protection from some of the harshest aspects of being a migrant in the UK. It is also important to remember that however vitriolic anti-Polish sentiment has become, some of these migration-orientated Brexit discussions did not limit themselves to insinuations about Eastern European workers as wage depressing, resource draining eastern others. Sights were always set on the external borders of the EU, and, for example, the spectre of Turkish nationals coming to Britain in the event of further EU enlargement (see [voteleave.uk](http://voteleave.uk) campaign posters). The timing of the referendum campaign, which ran concurrently with heightened concern about the 'refugee crisis', also worked to underline the multifaceted nature of the desire to control borders - not only against 'co-Europeans', but also against refugees seeking safety in the UK having travelled into and across Europe. The scripting of the acceptable and non-acceptable (Ford, 2011), deserving and undeserving migrants (Dhaliwal and Fokert, 2015) - or perhaps more accurately, the non-acceptable, and the even less acceptable migrants - in these campaigns elides the diverse experiences, subjectivities and positionalities of different mobile actors and ultimately distracts from addressing the structural and historical inequalities that set up these binaries in the first place. The Brexit vote may have partially reflected unease about 'Eastern European migrant workers', but as the other interventions here underline, it also held a mirror to, and amplified, wider and deeply entrenched, and often thinly disguised Islamophobic and racist, concerns about the EU's ability to keep these more othered others out - to disengage Britain from a Fortress Europe which was becoming too porous to those from beyond it. As Garner

(2018) notes, formal political campaigns that script immigration and Islam as an antagonism to British culture reflect a mainstreaming of white supremacy, in that racist ideas and assumptions are increasingly part of mainstream discussions on politics.

### **Final Thoughts**

We make three key points to conclude our discussion. First, that the experiences of Polish migrants after Brexit underline both the complexities of racial hierarchies and individual vulnerabilities in the face of geopolitical shifts and their aftermath. The fallout from the campaign and the haggling over the rights and status of EU nationals wreaks a fundamentally human cost - new insecurities, performances and visibilities, played out in day-to-day lives, through relationships, workplaces, public spaces and internalised anxieties. Being white does not offer immunity from this but the 'walls of whiteness' offer some shelter (cf. Ahmed, 2014). Putting these experiences into a wider context does not detract from this pain, and the enormity of the shift that many people are now feeling exposed to and lost within. But secondly, this wider context must be taken into view. The Brexit Leave campaign repeatedly used implied colonial discourses to set the UK up as a country apart; racial violence spiked in its aftermath; and non-EU migrants and refugees from all backgrounds and across Europe have been facing a migration regime increasingly designed to make them feel unwelcome, to hold them in limbo and to encourage their return. While some of this impetus is hardly limited to the UK context, this is what EU migrants in the UK now face - a new experience of re-bordering which will challenge all over again these assumptions of Europeanness, whiteness and belonging. In the 'outrage' that accompanies these journeys, it is imperative to find new solidarities with those who have already been, and continue to travel this path.

Finally, we highlight the value of critical whiteness studies to analyse more broadly how Brexit, and its underlying anti-liberal populism, is shaping understanding of race, privilege and power. While we are mindful of perpetuating whiteness as a central referent in discussions of Brexit (see Bhabra, 2018), we can also see that using a critical whiteness lens to analyse contemporary international migration to Europe allows us to not only consider how racial boundaries are set and reshaped in different historical contexts (Twine and Gallagher, 2008: 7), but also expose the continued contradictions and 'inflections' of whiteness as a form of identity and a system of power.

## Brexit Writings and the War of Position over Migration, 'Race' and Class

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It has been rightly suggested that Brexit is not a single, one-off event but a process that exists on the surface in many arenas of everyday life. Part of this process is represented by *writings* on Brexit 'or rather the vote to leave the EU' as 'a particular kind of thing' that needs to be explained. One of the 'many explanations' is Brexit as 'a revolt or protest on behalf of those "left behind" by forces of neoliberal globalisation' (Anderson and Wilson, 2017, 2). This short essay critiques an influential example of the genre: David Goodhart's (2017a) *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics* (henceforth *TRS*). Although presented as, among other things, an explanation of the outcome of the UK referendum on EU membership in 2016, the post-liberal, nationalist view espoused in *TRS* can be seen as part of a Gramscian 'war of position' (Forgacs, 1988, 431), an ideological play for hearts and minds (Jones et al, 2017, 75-78; Stephens, 2016).

Goodhart presents his book as a robust study of social trends that need to be better understood by the 'political class' (*TRS*, 233). However, it does not take much of a critical eye to see it as a marshalling of arguments designed to persuade its readers of a particular politics. Six months after the triggering of Article 50 by the UK government, Goodhart deployed a summary of the book to support the position in ongoing debates over the form of Brexit that, in certain circumstances, 'the vast majority of Brits could come together to make a success of that journey over the cliff edge' (Goodhart, 2017b). The central contention of *TRS* is that there are two prevalent ideological perspectives in Britain, which Goodhart refers to as 'Anywheres' and 'Somerwheres', and which map in approximate and complex ways onto two groups of people in society, to which he gives the corresponding labels, 'Anywheres' and 'Somerwheres'. While he attributes a range of views to each group, Goodhart's central point is that Somerwheres are unhappy with the pace and extent of 'cultural change' since the 1960s, in particular with the growing ethnic diversity of Britain, mass immigration, and the legacy of multicultural policies. Anywheres, on the other hand, are comfortable with such change because they are mostly university graduates, and, therefore, under the UK's residential university system, much more likely to live away from the place they grew up in than Somerwheres. '[M]y two tribes capture the reality of Britain's central worldview divide' (*TRS*, 23). The Brexit vote, as Goodhart would like his readers to understand it, was a 'revolt' by Somewhere people against the dominance of policies and social trends with which Anywheres are comfortable; he portrays it as Somerwheres taking back a degree of relative power in the national polity.

Goodhart does not pretend to be a Somewhere himself, defining himself as an Anywhere in terms of his lifestyle and the circles he mixes in. The latter come across as elite – for example, he describes an Oxford College dinner in 2011, where he sits between the then cabinet secretary and the Director-General of the BBC (*TRS*, 15). Moreover, Goodhart tells readers that he voted Remain in the 2016 Referendum, and mentions his association with Blue Labour (*TRS*, vii). There is an insidiousness in Goodhart's self-presentation in *TRS* and in his presentations of the work in the media and elsewhere. He tries to sound reasonable and open-minded increasing the chances that the disproportionately white, male, public-school



educated media colleagues who provide him a platform may see him as ‘one of us’ and all the more authoritative for it.

Yet while Goodhart tries to use *TRS* to gain readers’ trust for a new common sense, his own racialised authoritarian paternalism is never far from the surface (see Mishra, 2017). With an air of regret for a lost past Goodhart argues that what he calls the British ‘traditional elite’ is ‘much less likely than in earlier generations to remain connected to Somewheres through land ownership, the church, the armed forces or as an employer’ (*TRS*, 4). Elsewhere he adds that ‘neither the affluent nor employers feel the same obligation towards *‘their’* working class that they once did’ (*TRS*, 6, emphasis added). Goodhart pays far too little attention to the common inheritance among all working class people of the devastation of de-industrialisation, and the fallout of the 2008 banking crisis (Khan and Shaheen, 2017). Instead he furthers divisive ideas about ‘central and eastern Europeans some of whom act like commuter immigrants and make no effort to mix while others are settling and integrating well’ (*TRS*, 130). Although elsewhere he acknowledges that integration is a two-way process, the breezy language of ‘act like’ and ‘make no effort’ seems to place the onus on recently arrived international migrants. Goodhart does not have it in for international migrants and minorities alone. He asserts that education and geographical mobility are the key divides in British society, attacking universities, academics and students, while acknowledging at the same time that approximately 50 per cent of young people now attend university – hardly an elite minority. Goodhart’s nationalist anti-immigration rhetoric and his dismissal of what he refers to as ‘globalist leftism’ (2017c) contain echoes of late nineteenth century battles over migration, ‘race’ and national identity in Britain to which I will return.

First though it is important to look more closely at Goodhart’s use of ‘we’/ ‘us’. Goodhart is particularly concerned that those whom he sees as further removed in cultural terms from what he calls ‘the mainstream’ (2017, 131) should not receive equal treatment or status in the national polity. Although he does not define what ‘mainstream’ is in the UK context, he implies that nationals of eastern and central European EU countries are further removed from it than western and southern European ones, as are, not only international migrant people of colour from Africa and Asia, but, at some points in the book, their descendants too, regardless of their citizenship.<sup>2</sup> This is especially shaky ground for Goodhart, given that he himself is the child of an immigrant (his mother moved to the UK from the US). The implication is that white citizens of the USA and their descendants give rise to few, if any, issues of ‘trust and familiarity’ attributed to the arrival of non-white people, especially people arriving from countries in the Global South. Citing Robert Putnam, Goodhart argues that trust and familiarity are reduced by high levels of immigration and ethnic diversity ‘especially when the people arriving come from places that are culturally distant; absorbing 100,000 Australians is very different to 100,000 Afghans’ (*TRS*, 22). Among other things this assumes that the Australians are ‘white’ and the area they are ‘absorbed’ into is mainly ‘white’ too. Such deeply problematic assumptions form part of what Emejulu (2016) has called the ‘hideous whiteness of Brexit’, that has been disguised in part by social scientists’ misidentification of leave voters as primarily ‘white working class’ (see Bhabra, 2017).

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<sup>2</sup> For example, on pages 128 (in the quoting of an ‘eloquent short parable’ by Franz Timmermans regarding the lack of ‘integration’ of the ‘children (and grandchildren)’ of ‘many migrants’), 131 (in the critique of writers who ‘give no special weight to the ethnic majority’) and 132 (in the apparent favouring of an arrangement of ‘neighbourhood demography so that people from the ethnic majority can retain a sense of ownership of the area’).

The explicit concern in *TRS* with immigration to the UK from the global south portrays a hierarchical view towards humankind: 'Newcomers, *especially* refugees and *people from developing countries*, often draw out more than they pay in at least in the period after arrival and do not always have the same sense of allegiance to a country's norms or its national story – an indifference that was actively encouraged by first wave multiculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s. This makes many people feel uneasy' (*TRS*, 121-2, emphasis added). Goodhart does not expand on or try to justify his assertion that newcomers 'from developing countries' are likely to be less committed to the 'norms' and 'national story' of the country they arrive in than people coming from other countries. Like the statement that this can make 'many people feel uneasy' this implicitly continues the theme of lending greater priority to white than black and minority ethnic citizens (see Bhabra, 2017).

The problems with Goodhart's national 'we' is revealed again later in *TRS* in a discussion on the response to a question in an IPSOS MORI poll in 2004 – that was commissioned alongside his well-known 'Too diverse?' piece – regarding whether people agreed that 'other people seem to get unfair priority over you when it comes to public services and benefits' (itself clearly a leading question). The question was followed by another regarding what 'type of "other people"'. Asylum seekers and recent immigrants were 'most likely' to be named: Goodhart writes that '[asylum seekers and recent immigrants] are most obviously strangers to us, and we are less likely to identify with their position or be sure they will share our norms. But few people cited established minorities – implying that they were now regarded as part of the tapestry of the country' (*TRS*, 122). Yet, if the latter sentence were true (setting aside the question of *regarded by whom?*), why single out certain groups of newcomers as 'most obviously strangers to us'? The devil here is in the 'us' word.

The reader learns more about Goodhart's 'us' from how he discusses racisms in the UK. First, rather than accepting that there are different kinds of racism, he insists on a narrow definition. Secondly, even within this definition, he seems to want to explain rather than explicitly oppose it: 'And even when racism is racism, when it does involve dislike of or contempt for a particular group, it is not just about skin colour or even religion as such, it is about what skin colour or distinctive dress represent in terms of different values or behaviours or traditions and the challenge they present to mainstream norms' (*TRS*, 32). Again 'mainstream' is undefined but here it implies the privileging of a white British and Christian lens. It can be no surprise that the United Kingdom Independence Party is, for Goodhart, not a racist party but one 'representing a grumpy and sometimes intolerant strand in the British public' (*TRS*, 222).

Goodhart's treatment of Islam and Islamism is illustrative of the way he approaches racisms in the book. In a section on 'integration' that pushes a strongly assimilationist perspective, Goodhart turns to Muslims and, using the label 'Islamism', criticises 'some younger Muslims' for 'combining piety with enjoyment of many of the freedoms of liberal British society' (*TRS*, 130). This reads to me like a Somewhere ideology – and suggests that Somewhere-isms are seen by Goodhart as ok for non-Muslims but not so for Muslims. Islamism is used here as a weasel word to demonise Islam and Muslims just as it was in the 2000s by influential journalists Nick Cohen and Michael Gove<sup>3</sup> (Rogaly and Taylor, 2011, 209-210). Neither hate crimes committed against people judged by their appearance and/or location to be Muslim, nor widespread structural discrimination against Muslims seem to

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<sup>3</sup> Gove later became a prominent Leave campaigner and is, at the time of writing, a minister in the UK government.

warrant direct attention by Goodhart. Instead, continuing the thread of identifying those who do or do not belong to the 'mainstream', Goodhart implicitly defines Muslims, and minorities more broadly, as outside it: 'mainstream public opinion is... more wary of Muslims than other comparable minorities', going on to justify this because of 'greater daily segregation of Muslims, the unavoidable (sic) association with the jihadi violence of a small minority and the recent "grooming" scandals', casting those speaking out against anti-Muslim racism as either whingeing, exaggerating or both in a 'relentless narrative of Muslim victimhood and Islamophobia' (TRS, 130).<sup>4</sup>

Anti-Muslim racism was evident to varying degrees in the campaigns for the UK to leave the European Union in 2016, though appeals to it were not necessarily direct: 'while many believed the focus of the UKIP-inspired Brexiteer's ire was mainly white Europeans from the mainland undercutting British workers, it was clear to many within that formation itself that breaking with the EU and "taking back control of our borders" also represented an important opportunity to limit the numbers of Muslims entering Britain, Muslims whose culture many of them believed was incompatible with being British' (Virdee and McGeever, 2017, 6). Explicit racist imagery was nevertheless used, for example in the notorious campaign poster showing Nigel Farage pointing at a large number of people, mostly of colour, implicitly mostly Muslim, crossing the border between Macedonia and Slovenia in October 2015, with the headline 'Breaking Point', followed by the words: 'we must break free of the EU and take back control of our borders'. Other Leave campaign leaders, such as Boris Johnson, attempted to distance themselves from the poster, but their high profile involvement and repeated mantra of 'take back control' gave a veneer of respectability to the strong presence of anti-Muslim and other racisms in the Leave campaign as a whole – anti-Muslim racism was also strongly present in the doomed Conservative Party campaign to have Zak Goldsmith elected Mayor of London the month before the referendum.

As Virdee and McGeever (2017, 3) argue, 'the current crisis in Brexit Britain has been so overdetermined by racism' (including, but not only, anti-Muslim racism). In a recent book, Satnam Virdee (2014) makes a further, crucially important, intervention into historicizing the relation between racism, racialization and class in Britain, and it is to that work, and the historical perspective it provides for understanding Brexit writings, that I will now turn. Racism in the form of white nationalism has a long history in the UK, one closely intertwined with the history of the country as a colonizer and with shifting postcolonial immigration laws, and modes of governance of racialised minorities (Bhambra, 2015; Hall, 2017). Virdee's *Racism, Class and the Racialized Outsider* establishes clear analytical links between colonialism and the construction of whiteness and national belonging in Britain. The book covers a two hundred year period and, *contra* the apparently unchanging identities of the older 'white working class men' that Goodhart identifies as '[o]ne core group of Somewheres' (TRS, 3), offers an important reminder that the focus of racialized outsiderhood in Britain has shifted over this time, from Irish Catholics through much of the nineteenth century to Jewish immigrants – known as aliens – at the end of that century, and people of African and Asian heritage throughout (see Lentin, 2017).<sup>5</sup> Arranged chronologically, the book is especially helpful for its discussions of the mainstream political party responses to the arrival in the UK

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<sup>4</sup> See Warsi (2017) for an excellent critique of liberal commentators defining Muslims as outside the mainstream.

<sup>5</sup> For a powerful illustration of the negotiated, contingent process of claiming whiteness in the US, see Kelley (2000).

of Jewish people escaping racist pogroms in Tsarist Russia in the 1890s and early 1900s. It reproduces cartoons that could have been directly transplanted from the Leave campaign material used over one hundred years later. The cartoons warned of the dangers of immigration claiming Jewish 'aliens' were undercutting wages and taking the jobs of working class British citizens, just as Irish Catholic workers had been accused of doing in the 1830s (Virdee, 2014, 26). The debate over Jewish immigration led to the first legal restriction on immigration in Britain with the passing of the Aliens Act in 1905.

It is particularly instructive to read of the debate among socialists at the time between those supporting a white nationalist perspective and those taking a non-racialised view of working class struggle and identity. Referring to the former, Virdee (2017a, 368) describes how 'socialist nationalist support for Jewish workers attempting to organise themselves remained lukewarm at best'. The anti-semitism was barely restrained. Dockers' leader Ben Tillett wrote in a letter to the London Evening News, for example that: "'Our leading statesmen do not care to offend the great banking houses or money kings... For heavens' sake, give us back our own countrymen, and take from us your motley multitude'" (Cohen, 1984, 28, cited by Virdee, 2017a, 368). Virdee quotes similar sentiments supporting the trope of a Jewish conspiracy behind imperialist wars expressed by Keir Hardie's newspaper *Labour Leader*. "'Wherever there is trouble in Europe, wherever rumours of war circulate and men's minds are distraught with fear and change and calamity, you may be sure that a hook-nosed Rothschild is at his games somewhere near the region of the disturbances'" (Cohen, 1984, 20, cited by Virdee, 2017a, 369).

Throughout his book, Virdee shows how 'each time the boundaries of the nation were extended to include more members of the working class, this was accompanied and legitimized by a racialised nationalism that excluded more recent arrivals' (2017b, 15). He also reveals how this was contested within the labour movement often by people whose heritage connected them to historical or contemporary experiences of racialization. Goodhart's Brexit writing in *TRS* defines such people as outside the British 'mainstream'. If the 2016 Leave campaign can be classified (using Gramsci's application of military terms to politics) as a full frontal 'war of manoeuvre', *TRS* can logically be understood as engaging in a 'war of position'. Like several other Brexit writings it forms part of 'a phase of "revolution-reaction" or passive revolution... which follows upon a revolutionary offensive'. As part of a war of position *TRS* thus links to Gramsci's notion of hegemony in the senses of 'class alliances, "molecular" ideological and political work, consent' (Forgacs, 1988, 431). Goodhart's 'mainstream' has had enough of ethnic diversity, is 'wary' of Muslims (and is therefore not Muslim), and is more culturally 'distant' from some immigrants than others. Goodhart thus promotes not just a hegemony in terms of what he himself calls 'national fellow citizen favouritism' (2017a, 228), but a racialized hierarchy. His stated intention is to champion people he calls 'Somewheres', whom he has identified as being without influence over the direction of society. Yet through his definitions, his elisions and his silences, he furthers a divisive agenda, pitching his chosen 'mainstream' against racialized outsiders. As Roediger (2017a) has emphatically shown in the US, the idea promoted by Michaels (2006) and others that identity politics has weakened class solidarity badly misrepresents the historical record. The US context and the Trump presidency are of course distinct from the UK and the Brexit process. However, Trump's election too has inevitably spawned its own discursive battles, with some writers as divisive and inaccurate as Goodhart in their deployment of the ethnicized category 'white working class' (see Roediger, 2017b for an excoriating critique of Joan C Williams' book of this title). In spite of their

elusiveness,<sup>6</sup> multi-ethnic solidarities among working-class people are the most effective route to redressing social, economic and political injustice for all workers. And, as Virdee has argued so convincingly, in British history it has often been racialized outsiders who have taken the lead.

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<sup>6</sup> On which see Roediger (2017a, chapter 6) and Featherstone (2012).

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